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## CURRENT EVENTS AND DISCUSSIONS

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### THE RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK IN GREAT BRITAIN

As the history of Hebrew prophecy shows, it is in seeking a meaning in *facts* that those who speak for God are led to *truths*. If in contemporary events the divine purpose can be discovered, faith is assured; but if only human folly and wickedness are exposed, faith is challenged. The war brought bewilderment to many minds. Ignorant of, because indifferent to, historical causation, many Christian believers made bold guesses as to the reasons for God's sending, or at least allowing, the war. The problem of the divine providence was raised afresh, and often found an altogether inadequate solution. Even grotesque intentions were sometimes assigned to God, e.g., to punish Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment, Sabbath desecration, or excessive drinking. Others who had a clearer and wider view of the problem took refuge in a solution which has again and again reappeared, viz., that God's power is somehow limited so that he cannot do as he wills in his love, that he is himself engaged in a struggle against some opposing force, and needs the help of man to win the victory. It is along this path that Mr. Wells's mind has moved toward religion. But as the history of philosophy and theology alike shows, thought cannot remain in such a dualism.

One religious gain has been from the rethinking of the problem. The deistic view of God as indifferent to, and inactive in, human history has been discredited; and there is a growing tendency to find not only speculative satisfaction but even practical consolation in the view of God as fellow-sufferer with man, and man as fellow-worker with God. This tendency may even assume the more distinctively Christian form; many are thinking of the passion of God for man's sin in the Cross of Christ as the clue to the labyrinth of the divine providence. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" is an affirmation which is gaining fresh meaning; salvation comes only by sacrifice. Multitudes comforted themselves in their own sufferings and bereavements by assuring themselves

that this was a sacrifice which would bring to the world salvation from those evil conditions which were the cause of the war. Not only was the purpose of the war idealized, but even the method of war. No less exalted motive than the resolve to resist wrong and assert right, to defend weakness against strength, was taken into account, although the impartial observer must have been aware that this was not the only motive. The young manhood of the nation was called to the war as a crusade, and any hesitancy to respond to the summons was treated as a disobedience to the heavenly vision. Hence the indignation against, and the persecution of, the conscientious objector.

Not only was the cause without any qualification and reservation thus declared good, but it was often assumed that it could be only for the advantage, moral and religious, of the young men to enter the army. The trenches were assumed to be "a school of saints." That many lads from Christian homes came out of the fiery ordeal refined as pure gold, more mature in religious experience, more developed in moral character than they would have been under normal conditions, may be conceded. Some "found Christ" on the battlefield. There was some response to the efforts made to influence the soldiers for morals and religion. Many most admirable qualities were displayed—cheerfulness, unselfishness, comradeship, courage, heroism, self-sacrifice, where they might have been least expected. But patriotic partiality led not a few Christian preachers to ignore, if not to deny, many painful facts; profanity and obscenity in speech, drunkenness and uncleanness, were only too common; and many a boy has come home a moral wreck, diseased in body as in mind. The expectation even was cherished that with the return of "the boys" there would be a widespread quickening of the religious life of the churches; more alive themselves, they would impart life to others.

Even those who will not confess it, and may even themselves not be conscious of it, are disillusioned. The idealism of the call to fight has not found expression in the terms of peace. Hate, fear, and greed have been allowed to influence the settlement which has been proposed, but which the course of events already is proving must be modified. The idealism of a Wilson has suffered much damage from the chauvinism of a Clemenceau or Millerand,

the opportunism of a Lloyd George. Financial interests have been more potent than humanitarian considerations. That the covenant of the League of Nations has been embodied in the peace treaties may seem a token for good; but not only is the covenant defective in its terms; so far the three allies, Britain, France, and Italy, through their politicians and diplomats have been pursuing a policy, the result, if not the intention, of which is to perpetuate the old evil conditions in the relations of nations, and to discredit this new organization. The treatment of the League of Nations in the matter of Armenia looks almost like a deliberate attempt to undermine its influence.

The delay in the ratification of the treaties, and especially the action by the Senate of the United States, has done a great deal of mischief. Christian men in Great Britain do not and cannot believe that in this policy the Senate has been interpreting the mind and giving effect to the will of the nation as a whole, least of all, of the Christian churches. They are convinced that the idealism to which President Wilson for a time at least gave voice still survives. It seems a moral impossibility that such a nation should now, after sharing the common sacrifice of the war, withdraw into an isolation which would delay if not prevent that salvation for the nations for the sake of which the sacrifice was made. This assurance can be given. If the politicians should fail, the churches in Great Britain are resolved that the League of Nations shall not be allowed to perish through contempt or neglect. Denominational assemblies and individual congregations are pledging themselves to do their utmost and best to save the League and to make it effective as manifestly one of the ways God has appointed to make ready the way for the coming of the Kingdom. It is for the American churches in like manner to pledge themselves; and can there be any doubt that, if the moral and religious forces of the two nations unite in a persistent and strenuous endeavor, they cannot fail? I should despair of our churches if they allowed the nations to be robbed of this gleam of hope for a better day amid the darkness of the present time. Having given the state such support as they did in the prosecution of the war, they must not suffer the state to rob the world of that good, to secure which alone the war could be justified.

But the question arises: Have the churches in themselves the spiritual vitality and the moral vigor for such a task? Here too there has been disappointment. It is a comforting fact that, as far as it is possible to gain evidence on such a question, not many of the young men and young women who were withdrawn from the fellowship and the work of the churches by varied forms of national service have been lost altogether; most have come back with even greater zeal; and in some churches there have been a revival of interest and increase of service. But the religious revival and consequent moral reformation for which many hoped and prayed have not yet become manifest. If it come not quickly, there is even the danger that the old routine will again return. Against this peril the best men and women are on their guard, and are doing what they can. Although generalization in such a matter must be a conjecture, yet there is some reason for the belief that during the war many ministers gained an efficiency and secured an influence in the discharge of their pastoral duties such as in less trying conditions they would not have reached; and that as the experience has been matured and the character been developed among the younger men generally, the preaching is more living and powerful than it was in many a pulpit. The ministry seems to me on the whole a better instrument for any work that the churches may attempt.

The younger men especially are eager for a forward movement and some are impatient of what seems to them the lack of leadership on the part of the older men. In the universities and colleges, more even among the women than the men, there is a great deal of unrest. The new world, which politicians and even some preachers promised as a result of the war, is very slow in arriving; the signs of its coming even are not certain. Patience with this impatience is what the more responsible guides of the churches must practice, solicitude for those courses which are appealing to youth, sympathy with all aspirations, even when they appear very crude. Some papers by discussion have tended to encourage misunderstanding and estrangement between age and youth. The old are represented as solely responsible for the continuance of the war so long, and the unsatisfactory peace at last, while callous to the sufferings and sacrifices of the young. If it be true, as is sometimes maintained, that there is a physiological as well as a psychological ground

for the opposition of the young to the old, the more reason is there by all moral and religious means possible to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." The young need the experience of the old; the old need the freedom from tradition and convention of the young. Only by their conciliation and co-operation can a permanent progress be secured.

As regards those who are outside of the churches, there are reasons for grave concern. While many a husband and wife in their enforced absence from one another learned their worth, the one for the other, and the bonds of many a home have been drawn closer, yet, as the proceedings in the divorce court show, there has been an enormous increase in sexual license, and also its consequent venereal disease. The standard of modesty and chastity among girls has been lowered, and the recovery of the normal relations of the sexes is likely to be slow. Crimes of violence have been more frequent; many men in the army have learned the use of firearms, and have also come to count life cheap. High prices, the shortage of houses, the unemployment of ex-service men, the displacement of women from work which they had taken up when the men doing it were called to the colors, have produced a great deal of discontent. Against the profiteer, the man who has grown rich in his country's hour of need and peril, there is a very bitter feeling. Extreme theories are being preached, and are listened to by the discontented, although there is no ground for the assumption that the working classes have been captured by bolshevism. The attempt to identify the movement for improved industrial conditions by the trades unions with this bolshevism is nothing less than criminal folly and will only encourage the tendency it denounces. If a class war should take place, it will not be the working classes who will begin it but politicians who for their own ends wish to exploit the fears of the other classes.

These moral, economic, and social conditions must be taken into account in dealing with the religious outlook. The old evangelistic methods have lost their effectiveness, the old evangelical theology fails to appeal as it once did. Nothing is gained, much is lost, by mere denunciation of indifference. What the churches must find out is: How can their witness and work be made

adequate to the opportunity? Individualism in religion and morals, no less than in economics, is out of date. It is a social gospel which is needed today. Men want to know, not what will save individuals, but what will renew society. The two objects are not mutually exclusive. As society is composed of individuals, and individuals are dependent on society, the improvement of the one is the advancement of the other. It is a question of emphasis and approach. The Kingdom of God as the transformation of human society in all its interests and pursuits must be made the dominant conception, and to that social ideal the individual fact of the new birth must be related. Whether the eschatological view of the teaching of Jesus be right or wrong, it is certain that the moral principles in the Gospels cannot be treated as an *interim* ethic. There is an insistent demand that these very principles be applied in the solution of social as well as individual problems today. The Jesus of the Gospels, however criticism may seek to recompose his historical reality, makes an appeal to multitudes who are outside of the churches, and to whom the traditional theology has no meaning; it is to what they understand to be his teaching about God and man that they look for the light to guide the steps of society today along the forward path. Such movements as the "Faith and Labor" groups show that there is an approach of men and women of good will in the churches and in the labor organizations toward one another. The danger to be guarded against here is twofold. On the one hand the Christian church must not be identified with any single economic tendency or program. On the other hand the interest shown in economic questions must be a genuine appreciation of their moral importance, and not merely a means used to try to capture the working classes for the churches. It must be made quite clear that the churches are not seeking to advance their own interests, or the advantage of any one class in the community, but only the coming of the Kingdom of God in the individual as in any other sphere. No church can be required to accept and to advocate any ready-made program of reconstruction, even if all labor were agreed upon its terms; but the churches must strive unitedly to formulate a social program to which they can give the authority of the teaching of Jesus and the guidance of his spirit.

It is only by maintaining this attitude of independence and impartiality that a danger can be exposed, the imminence of which cannot be concealed. In many of the churches the majority of the members belong to the class whose financial interests will be affected by such changes as now appear inevitable. It is easy for a man of business, whose religious convictions and moral principles have been formed by the individualism which prevailed last century, to persuade himself that changes which lessen his control over, or his profits from, his mill, factory, or workshop are themselves morally wrong, and that to defend his own present position is his Christian duty. It is easy for him also to regard his pastor, whose views on economics are more adequate to the actual situation and its urgent necessities, as a mischievous, impractical doctrinaire. The dependence of so many of the schemes of the churches on wealthy givers puts them in a difficult position in formulating the Christian ideal. It will require great magnanimity on the part of many of the supporters of the churches to give their assent to the declaration from the pulpit of principles of reconstruction, the appreciation of which consistently will involve inevitably such modifications of the present economic system as will adversely affect their interests. It will require great courage on the part of ministers to preach what they believe is right, even when they know that by so doing they are risking the loss of a generous supporter. It will require much wisdom, also, if the minister is to avoid giving needless offense by his manner of presenting the truth; if it is the truth itself that offends, he cannot be blamed, for the truth must be freely and fully spoken.

Great as are the dangers, a position of neutrality on all these issues seems now impossible. During the war the churches espoused the course of the nation as righteous and good; and national service and sacrifice were commended as the call of Christ himself. Having assumed this perilous responsibility, the churches cannot now retire and affirm that the reconstruction necessary after the war involves no moral issues on which their testimony must be borne and their influence be used. If to denounce German outrages is a Christian duty, to expose social wrongs cannot be treated as an offense against the body of Christ. When all has been said that

can be said for caution and consideration, for the avoidance of offense whenever possible, it must still be admitted that a challenge to the churches has been made in the existing conditions, opinions, and sentiments, the refusal of which would involve that the churches would lose their moral authority and consequent religious influence and would become private societies for the mutual benefit of the comparatively small numbers of pious persons who would still adhere to them. In the making of the nation they would cease to have any potent influence.

It will be an advantage to express the issue as distinctly as words allow. If the reconstruction of human society after the war is to take place without a class war, a ruinous economic conflict if not a destructive political revolution, Christian principles must be applied to the economic and the social problems, and the Christian spirit must prevail in all efforts at their solution. For this end the Christian churches must bear their testimony and exercise their influence explicitly and directly, and not merely by attending to individual religious experience and moral character. In doing this duty the churches will, however, be compelled to condemn wrongs from which some of their members profit, and to defend changes which will adversely affect the interests of those members. Genuinely good Christian men have a conscience formed more under the influence of the capitalism which has been for their self-advancement than under the authority of Christ, who demands self-sacrifice from them. It may be that many of the churches as existing organizations may be compelled to sacrifice themselves in order that they may save the nation by securing the dominion of the Christian ideal in the economic and social conditions. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same sacrifice may some day be required of them to insist that Christian universalism may prevail in international relations. It may be necessary for them to appear unpatriotic that they may be Christian.

It is probable that very few even of the leaders of the Christian churches see the issue so clearly defined, and this is itself a danger. Nation and churches alike may "muddle through" into some sort of condition in which there will be a slight improvement in the economic and social order and the churches will appear at least to hold their own; but neither will society be refashioned according

to the Christian ideal, nor will the churches have the share in the making of what the nation will become, that they should desire. A great opportunity may pass, and a more bitter disillusionment within and without the churches may follow. What would avert such a calamity would be (and is it too great a thing to inquire of the Lord?) such times of refreshing from His Presence by His Spirit that the churches, ministers and members alike, would rise to the height of their calling and would do and dare, whatever the interests of the Kingdom might require. As Pentecost followed the certainty of the Risen Reigning Lord in the primitive community, so the enthusiasm and the energy of such a revival and reformation can only come as faith gains an ever firmer grasp of the eternal reality of God in Christ Jesus the Lord; and there is a promise, if not marked, that the churches are recovering faith, and that many pulpits sound forth faith's certainty.

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**The Religious Activities of Undergraduates.**—The Christian Union of the University of Chicago, an organization concerned with the whole religious life of the University, has made a survey of the activities of the undergraduates in religious and social service. The work was carried through by a group of undergraduate students with the direction of the Chaplain of the University. The period surveyed was the academic year 1919-20.

The principal means employed, although this was supplemented by other investigation, was a questionnaire passed to every student at chapel. The undergraduates attend chapel once a week in four groups on four different days. Each group consists of about six hundred. The chapel exercise occupies twenty minutes. During the week when the questionnaire was presented, the Chaplain explained each day the character of the survey and asked for the co-operation of the students.

The investigation was made at the end of the spring quarter when 2,800 undergraduates were in attendance. Of these, 295 were excused from chapel for various satisfactory reasons. A small number would be absent each day for specific reasons. Two thousand and sixty-five questionnaires were properly filled out. There were thus 440 who either did not attend chapel that week or failed to answer the questions. It is probable therefore that while 74 per cent of the students actually

furnished the information, the results are good for nearly the whole number.

Eighty-eight per cent of the students reporting stated that they were members of some religious body, distributed as follows: 67 per cent, Protestant; 12 per cent, Jewish; 8 per cent, Catholic; 1 per cent, miscellaneous. Of the 2,065 students, 1,268 were men and 797 women. The Protestants and Jews were about the same proportion for men and women, but of the men, 10 per cent were Catholic, of the women, less than 5 per cent. A surprising fact developed that there were more women than men without religious affiliations—15 per cent as against 9 per cent.

Every student attends chapel once a week and they were asked to state how often they attended some other religious service. It appeared that 92 per cent were accustomed to go to church at least once a month and 45 per cent were regular attendants every Sunday. It is questionable whether any other group of 2,000 persons in the United States would present a more satisfactory condition.

It was desired to find out how far the students are taking part in less formal religious exercises. One hundred and eighty-five or 14 per cent of the men attended a class for religious education or a Young People's Society at least once a month, 119 of them being regular weekly attendants. Of the women, 163 or 20 per cent attended once a month and 110 regularly each week. Thirteen per cent of the students were engaged in some form of religious work such as Sunday-school teaching, president of young people's societies, actual pastoral work, Gideons, choir directors and soloists, assistants at missions and with the Salvation Army, and directors of shop meetings. The women were strongly represented in missionary societies, as pianists and organists and as leaders in church-welfare agencies.

The survey was concerned to discover the extent of the social service work of students other than that which was performed in the churches. Seven per cent of the students stated that they were members of a community-service organization. Thirteen per cent were engaged in definite social service work. The disproportionate number of women was very marked, 24 per cent of the women as against 6 per cent of the men. The particularly efficient work of the Y.W.C.A. in placing about 200 women in social work helps to account for this. Some of the activities mentioned were United Charities case work, boys' clubs, sick visitation, care of children in social settlements, teaching English to foreigners, (and one Chinaman who reversed the order and put it "teaching Chinese to English"), Red Cross work, girls' clubs, work in police stations, legal aid, directors of Americanization courses.

A type of social service which is less spectacular than the above and which is often neglected in an estimate of students' activities is that of non-renumerative household work. It was discovered that 216 men, or 17 per cent, were engaged in household work and 296 women, or 37 per cent. Forty-nine of the men and 95 of the women were doing more than ten hours a week. Inasmuch as student members of the family are often thought of as somewhat selfish persons, these figures are particularly interesting.

As bearing on the opportunity for social service, it was desirable to find how large a number of the students were engaged in renumerative work. Five hundred and thirty-nine men or 42 per cent and 224 women or 30 per cent were so engaged. Four hundred and nine men and 114 women were doing more than ten hours per week; 228 men and 58 women were doing more than 20 hours per week. There were frequent cases among the men of from 30 to 40 hours per week. The renumerative work of the women was naturally much less.

How many of the undergraduates were actually preparing for some form of religious or social vocation? Seventy-six men and 68 women indicated that they had definitely decided their life-work in this direction, while several others indicated that they were considering the matter. Among the different vocations mentioned by the men were: social service, 40; ministry, 12; general mission work, 4; medical mission work, 12; Y.M.C.A. secretaries, 3. Among the activities mentioned by the women were: general social service, 53; missions, 10; religious education, 4. Out of the entire undergraduate student body, therefore, 7 per cent have decided to devote their lives to some form of religious or social service.

**A Significant Example of Co-operation between Churches.**—The ideal of the Interchurch World Movement for interdenominational co-operation was not an idle dream. It actually has been working in Montana for more than a year. The story is told by G. Clifford Cress in a pamphlet entitled, *The Montana Plan of Every-community Service*. A survey conducted by the Home Missions Council presented some startling facts. Many communities were without Christian ministration, while in others the provisions were wholly inadequate. In some the various denominations were overlapping in their efforts. The Council's proposals for united action led to a conference of nine denominations. This Conference, after a careful study of the conditions in a number of different types of communities, outlined a plan of co-operative Christian service for the state.

Some of the more important principles of action adopted by the Conference are:

1. No attempt to be made to merge or obliterate denominations.
2. Refer all cases of overlapping to denominations concerned without recommendations.
3. Promote joint enterprises under denominational boards only as rare exceptions.
4. Provision for affiliated or associate membership for devoted adherents of denominations unrepresented in the community to be encouraged.
5. Where but one circuit is feasible and unless other factors are determinative, such circuits should be allocated to the denomination whose local church is best able to provide ministry.
6. Where communities are destitute of wholesome recreational facilities and other needed community service, the church should endeavor to provide such facilities.
7. Fields unsought by any denomination shall be assigned to the denomination best able to serve them.

Upon these principles one hundred and seven areas were allocated to the various denominations, and almost without exception the results have been favorable beyond expectations. A better understanding of the real needs of the different communities, a spirit of brotherhood and unity of purpose among the co-operating denominations, and the ability to carry on the work of the Kingdom much more effectively have been immediate results. Moreover, the Congregational Polytechnic Institute has made an unequivocal offer of its plant to an interdenominational organization for the promotion of a united Christian College for the state. Other advances are in prospect for the near future. This admirable plan should commend itself to missionary organizations in other states and sections of the country.

**The Task of the Church in the Industrial Crisis.**—Professor Albion W. Small, in an article entitled, "Christianity and Industry" (*American Journal of Sociology*, XXV, [May, 1920] 673-94) presents an exceptionally sane survey of the problem. The task of Christianity he contends, is to save the world by manning its essential operations with people actuated by the Christian spirit. It should be remembered that Christianity is one of the many factors that have molded western civilization. It is also true that many of the achievements of this civilization have been realized in spite of the opposition of the church. There have been two contradictory conceptions of character in the history of Christianity;

(1) that character is a condition complete in itself within the person,  
(2) that character is an achievement of right relations with others. Unsocial and subjective monasticism resulted from the former; and an attempt to realize the Christian spirit in Red Cross drives, cleaner politics, settlement houses, and the abolition of capitalism, apart from religious exercises, has often been the method of the latter. Instinctively the church has sought a place somewhere between these two extremes.

The method of the church must be educational—a type of education that makes its appeal to the conscience and the heart. We saw the part that this played during the war. The attitude that Christians ought to take toward war was visualized. With the recent shift in the economic situation it has become clear that the central human question now and perhaps for many generations to come is the matter of righteousness in economic relations. The parties in conflict range from those who believe that property is robbery to those who can see nothing wrong with the present property system. Between these extremes are the masses seeking their way out. The church cannot be neutral. It must give aid to those who seek to make a critical examination of the present property system, or stand with those who are opposed to that examination. The church can go far toward preventing a wasting war between the contending parties by aiding the movement for a critical examination of existing property rights. Such an attitude will do much to keep the conflict within the limits of law and order. It is a question of adapting a traditional pietism to a fictitious moral order, or recognizing the challenge to make this world Christian.

**The Destination of the Epistle to the Hebrews.**—In an article entitled, "The Epistle to the Hebrews and Roman Christianity" (*Harvard Theological Review*, XIII [July, 1920], 205-19) Professor E. F. Scott presents the theory that the letter was written to a select group of Christians in Rome, who having advanced beyond the sins of paganism, are exhorted to "press on to perfection." The most significant of his reasons are the following:

1. The doctrines of the Epistle, though roughly parallel to Paulinism, are characteristically non-Pauline; and the Roman church had grown up under the influence of other Christian leaders. Mysticism and sacramentalism are conspicuously absent from Hebrews, which is in harmony with the doctrines of the Roman church as reflected in both Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas.

2. The idea of Christianity as a given body of beliefs and practices, based on the principle of authority, is distinctly seen in this Epistle.

Such an attitude is quite in keeping with the Roman type of mind which emphasized loyalty to the confession and reverence for the past.

3. The absence of any outstanding polemic against heresies, also suggests the Roman church which, according to Ignatius, was "filtered clear from every foreign stain."

4. The lack of any distinction between Jew and gentile, with the accompanying idea of Jewish institutions and ordinances as normative for the church, reminds us of Rome where the trend was early toward order and uniformity of organization. Likewise, the idea of the Christian's approach to God through Christ as High Priest would find welcome acceptance in Rome.

**When Christianity and Islam Were Closely Akin.**—How far does the efficiency of a religion depend upon its ability to adjust itself to new conditions of progress? This interesting question is suggested by an article entitled, "Islam" by Albert Kinross (*Atlantic Monthly*, CXVI [Nov., 1920], 669-80). Islam appears to the observer as a static faith, one sufficient for the needs of the age of the Crusades, but essentially closed to all progress. In its beginnings it was superior to the Christianity which it replaced in the East, a Christianity of "feud, faction, greed, persecution and sectarianism." Likewise, the famous Saladin was a finer gentleman than any of his Christian enemies; but the Moslem faith has stood still or degenerated since that time, while Christianity has made great strides in its development.

This reactionary, unprogressive history of Islam is explained on the ground of several inherent characteristics: (1) It is predominantly masculine in its emphasis. Its utter disregard for the worth and individuality of woman has been a strong determining factor in its downfall in such strongholds as the Turkish Empire. (2) It is too intensely individualistic in its emphasis, whereas the modern world requires co-operation. (3) Notwithstanding this individualism it has not developed great original thinkers and leaders, for it is essentially a faith of inhibitions. It has tried to live by negation and denial, in the face of a vital, growing Western world which demands affirmation. (4) It is still but semi-civilized. Its leading idea of political action is "to murder and mutilate the men of the opposing party and to violate their women." (5) Its exclusive tribal morality and social outlook renders it wholly incapable of solving modern problems of international and inter-racial relationships.

Will Islam yet adjust herself to the modern world or will she be left behind in the new order of world-life? On this answer will largely depend the future of many peoples.